

Sunday, January 9, 2022
"Meet Your King"
Summary of Why Repentance is Needed
Matthew 3:1-17
Wayne Shelton

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This historical vignette can help us understand the role of John the Baptist at the beginning of the Gospels. With John comes the return of the prophetic word, and his message is one of warning: the LORD is going to return to his temple. He is like a refiner's fire (Mk 1:2-3; cf., Isa 40:3; Mal 3:1-4). When he returns, what will he find? God's people must not rest on their pedigree or history. They must repent before the coming of the great day of the Lord. God's people must not presume upon their relationship to Abraham; if God wanted to, he could turn stones into children of Abraham. Instead, John's message is for the people to bear fruit in keeping with repentance (Mt 3:8-10; Lk 3:8-9). These are the words of a prophet. John calls for repentance, which explains his baptizing ministry. He is signaling that the great end-time cleansing was at hand, promised in texts like Ezekiel 36:25-29. John the Baptist is the necessary forerunner of the Messiah (see Mt 11:11-14; 17:9-13). John baptizes only with water; the Messiah would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire (Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:33). John's ministry of anticipation signals salvation is near.

